



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE SUPPORTS SUPERVISOR RIDLEY-THOMAS' CALL FOR FEDERAL INVESTIGATION INTO L.A. COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENT AND OFFICE OF EDUCATION

LOS ANGELES – The National Urban League today publicly endorsed Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas' efforts to reform the Los Angeles County Probation Department and the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), calling for a federal investigation into the two Departments.

At the urging of Blair Taylor, CEO of the Los Angeles Urban League, National Urban League President and CEO Marc H. Morial forwarded a letter of support to US Attorney General Eric C. Holder, urging the Department of Justice to begin criminal and civil investigations into the two County Departments.

"I applaud your leadership on the issue of juvenile justice reform and civil rights. We support your efforts to secure an investigation into the Los Angeles County Department of Probation, and the Los Angeles County Office of Education," Morial wrote in his letter to the US Attorney.

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas applauded the National Urban League's endorsement of his call for a federal investigation as part of his efforts to protect the youth in the Probation system and restore public confidence in the Departments.

The National Urban League joins the National NAACP, which overwhelmingly adopted a resolution at its annual convention last week, calling on a federal investigation.

"The trials and tribulations of juvenile probationers in Los Angeles County have now been brought before the entire nation by two of the premier civil rights organizations in America," the Supervisor said.

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The Supervisor is attending the National Urban League Convention in Washington D.C., where he met with Taylor, Morial, National Urban League Trustee John Mack, and L.A. Urban League Board Chairman Carl Ballton, to discuss the Probation crisis.

“The L.A. Urban League is proud to stand with Supervisor Ridley-Thomas and his call for the Department of Justice to investigate this serious problem,” Taylor said. “The matter is urgent and we must act now.”

The L.A. County Probation Department currently has 6,000 employees and a \$700 million annual budget. More than 21,000 youth are currently on probation (greater than the population of 17 cities in Los Angeles County).

Supervisor Ridley-Thomas’ concerns stem from reports that problems at the Probation Department are spread far beyond the confines of its remote youth camps. County auditors and the Department’s own investigations found evidence of wrongdoing by managers and Probation officers throughout the Department.

In addition to his call for a federal investigation, the Supervisor has hosted public events to engage parents, educators, and community stakeholders in detailed and candid discussion about the challenges facing the Probation Department.

In less than a week’s time, he has hosted public events where the community had an opportunity to interact with the new Probation Chief, Donald Blevins, and facilitated the County’s first-ever summit to engage the community in developing a solid plan to successfully transition youth from the Probation system back into their respective communities.

Supervisor Ridley-Thomas has stressed that while Chief Blevins’ leadership is welcome, the scale of distress in the Department clearly requires more than any individual manager can provide.

“The problems at Probation are too great to drop at the feet of a new manager alone,” the Supervisor said.

“I am extremely grateful for these two respected organizations’ support of my efforts to restore public confidence in the Departments. We’ve tried to repair the Departments from within, and we now know the results.”

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